

A recent CIA memorandum concluded that it would be at least 2 years, + perhaps longer, before ARVN would become an effective fighting force. The estimate of 2 years depends on the achievement of favorable military + psychological conditions during that time, an achievement considered unlikely.

... We believe that the more crucial problems -- leadership, morale, discipline, + training -- are long term + highly complex + we are not confident that significant improvement in all those fields will be accomplished during the next year or so. .

ARVN effectiveness

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Although ARVN small-unit actions increased slightly in 1967, daytime small-unit contacts dropped precipitously in 1968 to an estimated 813, from 3,089 contacts the previous year. Nighttime small-unit contacts also dropped, but not so steeply, from 8,233 in 1967 to 6,330 in 1968. Nighttime contacts by small US units actually increased, from 1,651 in 1967 to 1,888 in 1968.

In 1967, for every 1,000 men in ARVN units, there were 4 enemy KIA in small-unit contacts; in 1968 this ratio dropped to an estimated 1 per 1,000.

... In any event, ARVN's effectiveness has long suffered from an overly defensive posture, particularly in terms of small-unit operations, night attacks, ambushes, & sustained patrolling. Available reports do not suggest any major breakthrough.

Arvn sufficiency

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If NVAF regular units were withdrawn but NVAF personnel remained in VC units ~~as~~ as fillers, the relative balance would be more difficult to assess. Under these circumstances it would probably be necessary to provide the RVNAF with sufficient US combat support to make up for its deficiencies until the entire modernization & self-sufficiency program were completed.

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However, we do not believe that the RVNAF will be able to eradicate the VC political-military apparatus or to reduce significantly the level of insurgency. Indeed these objectives, as well as the resolution of complete & deeply rooted RVNAF deficiencies, are realistically possible only in the long term context.

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The presence of substantial numbers of NVA fighters in VC units, in the absence of any US combat troop involvement, would tend to negate even favorable short-term, not to mention long-term, prospects for the RVNAF.

ARVN Sufficiency - how long??

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Under current & foreseeable circumstances, it will probably take a minimum of 2 years before structural & technical reforms can make any substantial contribution toward RVNAF fighting effectiveness. The more critical deficiencies -- motivation, discipline, & leadership -- are essentially deeper & longer-term problems, some arising out of complex socio-political traditions & others greatly dependent on the prevailing political & military trend highlighted by PRVN battlefield successes could have considerable effect on RVNAF motivation & morale. A stable political situation, & particularly one in which the top military leadership is united & secure (through or last election) would favorably affect discipline & lower-level leadership.

ARVN improvement -

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- a. Overall, RVNAF capabilities ~~to~~ and efforts have improved.
- b. Despite these improvements, there has been no breakthrough in RVNAF performance. RVNAF performance is still directly related to US efforts.
 - the RVNAF desertion rate is now the highest since early 1966.
 - RVNAF lost almost 120,000 men due to desertion in 1968.
- c. RVNAF, despite some minor inroads, continues to suffer from sig. systemic & attitudinal problems.

While mobile offensive operations are generally effective at battalion level, such operations by both larger & smaller units are less effective: higher staffs lack experience & company operations lack the requisite force. Further, these operations have not yet reached the level of effectiveness of US units. An ARVN regular battalion is about $\frac{1}{2}$ as effective as a US battalion.

Looting & other misconduct by Republic of Vietnam Armed troops toward the civilian populace have undermined the confidence of the people in RVNAF. Despite some efforts to correct the situation, efforts to undertake the required attitudinal change of RVNAF towards the populace have not been productive.

.... What may be a more serious problem, however, is not that looting will probably continue despite even the most concerted reform efforts but that it is part of the larger problem of the army's lack of compassion & respect for civilians life & property. Such lack of compassion, in turn, is likely to further alienate the civilian population from the gov't's cause.

As of the end of Nov 1968, only about 21.2% of the pop.

lived in areas where the VC were considered eliminated (this does not include non-banquet secure pop - as rating of this group does not include specific VC questions -- and the extent of ~~the~~ VC may be considerable). According to HES figures, about 61% of the total pop & 8.7% of the rural pop is subject to VC influence; this has increased since 1967 as we know more about the VC, despite anti-intra-structure efforts. Recent VC pol-activity has also offset our efforts to destroy the VC -- as of the end of Dec. 1968, about 1/2 of SVN's villages had "liberation committees"; about 10% of the relatively secure pop. lived in areas with such committees.

-- Actual GVN control is increasing very slowly. As of Dec. 1968, only about 47% of the pop. of SVN was under primary GVN influence.

with only 32% in rural areas.

-- whereas the VC has a disciplined org. at village / hamlet level, the GVN does not. The GVN structure is smaller by almost one-half -- the GVN has only about 15% of its structure at this level.

-- The existing rural GVN org. has little protection. During 1968, about 1300 GVN officials were killed + 300 abducted (it is likely that the large majority of these were from rural areas).

-- there is no sig. programmed expansion of GVN civil manpower resources at village + hamlet level. In fact, the GVN structure has declined in size due to general mobilization and input into RVNAF.

RVNAF handles VC sufficiently

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Without US combat support & when opposing VC main & local force units, the RVNAF would have to reduce the number of offensive operations & adopt more of a defensive posture. This would result in loss of control by the Gov. of V over substantial rural areas.

... If external support from the north were to continue, it is visualized that timer personnel would infiltrate in ever-increasing numbers to counter any substantial RVNAF success. This could result in a prolongation of the conflict unless substantial Free World Mil. assistance forces presence were either continued or re-established.

... If most US forces ~~were~~ were withdrawn now, RVNAF improvement may stop or regress. Most RVNAF gains are closely related to support provided directly & indirectly by US Forces; if these forces are withdrawn rapidly, RVNAF's newly gained confidence may collapse.

ARVN - sufficing

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-- while there has been considerable progress in increasing the force levels of RVNAF (now at about 826,000 to be expanded about 872,000 by end FY 70), the initial expansion & modernization was designed to maximize combat power, rather than develop a balanced force. The impact of this expansion & modernization is just now being felt. The second phase of the modernization & improvement programs is to develop a balanced force capable of coping with the internal VC threat, but despite acceleration, goals will not be met before end FY 72.

→ what extent could ARVN → also handle ⁴⁰² WIA
w/ air & art. support? + ground forces? with US direct support?

Today's RVNAF, without full support of US combat forces, could not cope with a sizeable level of NVA Forces.

a. Should the present RVNAF be reinforced with US air & artillery support, their capability of defense would be improved, but not to the extent of being able to cope with the types & complexity of combat imposed by major NV/CSA involvement.

-- the RVNAF, with their present structure & degree of combat readiness, are inadequate to handle a sizeable level of NV/CSA forces. The RVNAF simply are not capable of attaining the level of self-sufficiency & overwhelming force superiority that would be required to counter combined VC/insurgency & NV/CSA main force otherwise. Some of the RVNAF

would necessarily have to be redeployed to concentrate defenses in
and around critical population centers and installations, thus abdicating # a
greater extent of rural areas to VC/NVA control.

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RVN sufficiency

The JCS, CINCPAC, & ComosmarU consider that by 1972 the planned Phase II RVNAF will be adequate to handle the VC insurgency if the VC are not reinforced & supported by the NVA.

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Without major reforms within the RVNAF command & selection system, however, it is unlikely that the RVNAF as presently organized & led will ever ~~be~~ constitute an effective political or military counter to the VC. Moreover, as the Govt major presence in the countryside, the RVNAF as presently constituted will only continue to widen the gap which exists between the Govt & the rural pop.

A RVN sufficiency

officers

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Unless the closed system of loyalties and regionalism is replaced in the promotion and assignment of officers the same problems of inept leadership & corruption will continue to paralyze the RVNAF regardless of the magnitude of future US/ Allied assistance to the RVN.

ARVN - sufficiency

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